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Empirical investigation of a postmodern model of spirituality within the population of Republic of Ireland

Abstract

Spirituality is a phenomenon which continues to attract much interest in the Western culture. Throughout the years, it has changed in form and developed in understanding. It has become unprecedentedly broad and embraced by many people, even those who do not consider themselves to be religious. Indeed, spirituality is a subject of debate within academic and non-academic circles regarding its shape, place, function, and definition. This debate and the academic investigation reveals that as a field of study it is undergoing intense and vigorous development. However, there are a number of conceptual deficiencies which need attention, namely; identity and method. The aim of this study is to develop the concept of spirituality according to the current European population. The study applies Structural Equation Modelling (SEM) and finds current spirituality functioning as a three-dimensional model composed of transcendence, immanence, and purpose. This concept is predicted by 13 independent variables. The findings conclude that current spirituality is a person's individual existential dimension, being subject to change through the influence of various psychological, religious and social factors. The findings of the research describe its practical implication within formational social fields such as education, counselling, and psychotherapy.

KEYWORDS spirituality; religion; counselling; quantitative research methods; structural equation modelling (SEM)

Introduction

The concept of spirituality functioning within the Western world (Flanagan 1999) started to emerge within the Judeo-Christian tradition around 3,000 years ago, (Schneiders 2005). Frohlich (2007), confirms the precedence of the Christian tradition in the creation of spirituality as an identifiable subject, as does Sheldrake (1995, 2009). In more recent years however, since spirituality detached itself from religion, a lot has been done to identify and understand it as a new phenomenon (Harmon et al. 1985; Reed 1992; Oldnall 1996; Zinnbauer et al. 1997; Perrin 2010). While religion ceased to be a monopolist provider of content for spiritual life, spirituality appeared as a neglected discipline. At the same time, it crossed academic thresholds and was almost immediately adopted by secular fields such as health care (King 2000), workplace (Garcia-Zamor 2003), feminist (Clifford 2005), or, even atheist environments (Comte-Sponville 2009). As a new phenomenon, it has weak conceptual boundaries and methodological qualities, and it has started to function within these new and various settings in an uninhibited, but often also uncontrolled or even disorganised manner. As a result, representatives of various academic and non-academic disciplines can take part in spiritual discourse without questioning their competency in the subject. The term spirituality is often applied without an understanding or at least a uniform agreement as to the identity of the domain.

Ellison (1983) was one of the first people to begin categorising an identification of spirituality in a new form and was a pioneer in developing a quantitative approach within the discipline by introducing the Spiritual Well-Being Scale (SWBS) (Ellison 1983). Later, Elkins et al. (1988), conceptualised spirituality within a theoretical model based on the humanistic approach; using concepts of spirituality presented by key intellectual thinkers such as Abraham Maslow, John Dewey, William James, Erich Fromm, Victor Frankl, and Carl Young. This model comprised of nine components: the transcendent dimension, meaning, and purpose in life, the mission in life, sacredness of life, material values, altruism, idealism, awareness of tragic, and fruits of spirituality.

Progress on the path of holistic comprehension of spirituality from the secular perspective started with Mobergs' (1986) studies, which offered a two-dimension understanding; with a vertical dimension relating to God and divine reality and, a horizontal sphere referring to the earthly aspects of life/purpose. Unruh, Versnel, and Kerr (2002) suggest a three-dimensional perception of spirituality; comprising of transcendent, and immanent dimension with a further element organising purposefulness of human life. Likewise, Hyman and Handal (2006) support a two-factor approach to spirituality focusing on the internal and subjective sphere of experience with divine reality or God. However, despite the emergence of theoretical models and empirical evidence, the realm of spirituality was still viewed as a new and 'fuzzy' concept (Spilka 1993; Spilka and McIntosh 1996), and perhaps remains as such today (Harvey 2016).

Schneiders (2003), and Sheldrake (2003) propose that spirituality comprehends the human condition in mundane reality, where individuals search for spiritual fulfilment in secular life, and divine relation to God and faith. This perception was confirmed by Kielkiewicz and Dalzell (2014), exploring the identity of spirituality in its origins. Similarly, spirituality can be viewed as the coexistence of two orders, firstly; life experience with practice, values, deeds within community, family and cultural circumstances and secondly; in the context of search for the ultimate truth, self-reflection, development of ability to fulfilment and dedication of one's own life to others by conversion and prayer (Spohn 1997).

All these theories are converging to some degree; nevertheless, there is a discussion in understanding the meaning and nature of spirituality. Thus, some researchers emphasise the divine aspect (Reed 1987; Walton 1999); hope (Dubree and Vogelpohl 1980); practice (Liebert 2002) and human suffering (Lindholm and Eriksson 1993). Others, however, have viewed spirituality more multidimensionality, as an embracing human relation to God, to nature and to the community, where people have friends and family, and live with other people (Miller and Martin 1988). Christian-theological tradition represented by Conway (2007) suggested more multidimensional explanation of spirituality where spirituality is sourced in human spirit, which manifests its being in seven main dimensions: (1) spirituality unifies different spheres of life such as emotional, moral, social and political; (2) it transcends human self and human communal life; (3) it strives for new possibilities and develops quality of life; (4) it takes control over nature; (5) recognises transcendent dimension of life; (6) unifies differences; and (7) it allows to accept the tragic dimension of life such as death or suffering.

Evidence obtained from the field of medicine and health care reported over 30 spiritual concepts such as the purpose of life, relation to happiness and self-realisation, dialogue with self (DS), relation with the community, references to transcendent dimension or undefined supernatural sphere of life and ability to transcend own self (McCarroll-Butler 2005). Similarly, Galek et al. (2005) reported, within a sample of hospital chaplains and patients that spirituality is about finding purpose in life, fulfilment, happiness and then transcendence in face of suffering and death. Another patient study reported that spirituality is perceived as to be a relationship with God through faith and prayers, and existential scope with participation within the community (Rovers et al. 2001). Among numerous elements that influence spirituality, another factor has been identified in the research to have a significant impact on spirituality; that is self-esteem (Johnson, Sandler, and Griffin-Shelley 1988; Bradshaw 1988; Lindgren and Coursey 1995; Crocker and Wolfe 2001; Crocker and Park 2004; Hawke, Hennen, and Gallione 2005). A further qualitative study has indicated the importance of culture in the shaping of spirituality (Beaudoin, 1998; Flanagan 1999; Lynch 2002; Finnegan 2008; Porter 2009; Perrin 2010). Additionally, Taves (2003) explored the perspective of spirituality functioning in cultural context from the historical and current viewpoint as discipline for the purposes of human formation. Recently, Rovers and Kocum (2010) developed and tested a conceptual model of spirituality using quantitative statistical techniques. They applied structural equation modelling (SEM), whereby the conceptual model using three factors of Faith, Hope and Love was statistically tested.

Despite these contributions during the past 40 years of spirituality as an academic discipline, it still appears as largely undefined. A comprehensive study within the field needs to be conducted in order to develop a holistic and commonly accepted concept of spirituality, which regards, thousands of years of tradition, postmodern social trends, and recent academic findings. This is a necessary step in order to progress spirituality as an academic domain. Spirituality needs to adapt its own method, respectively in the research field as well as in its practice. These aspects are compulsory in order of progressing spirituality and gaining respect as one of the academic disciplines. Therefore, the main objective of the current study is to propose a new theoretical model (see Figure 1) and validate it within a large adult sample using structural modelling techniques.

Method

Participants and procedure

Once ethical approval was granted, an opportunistic sampling approach was undertaken. Data was collected around the Midland and Dublin regions of the Republic of Ireland, with the permission of several libraries, churches, and colleges. Participants were informed as to the nature of the study and that their participation was voluntary. Guidelines were provided on how to complete the survey. Participants were assured of confidentiality and anonymity as their responses were to be anonymous and returned in a non-identifiable sealed envelope. The voluntary nature of participation was outlined and the withdrawal from the process was possible at any stage.

The sample included 268 ($N = 268$) participants of which there were; 175 females (65.3%), 91 males (34%). Ages ranged from 18 to 78 years, with an average age of 32.65 years ($M = 32.65$, $SD = 12.97$) and most (72.4%; $n = 194$) came from urban background. Additionally, 4.5% ($n = 12$) received only primary school education, 8.6% ($n = 23$) received secondary school education, a further 23.5% ($n = 63$) had unfinished college/university, and 63.1% ($n = 169$) had completed college/university education. Just over 2% (2.2%; $n = 6$) did not state their education level. Regarding to marital status; 62.3% ($n = 167$) were single, 24.6% ($n = 66$) were married, 6% ($n = 16$) were divorced/separated, 1.1% ($n = 3$) were widowed, and 6% ($n = 16$) did not provide information. Religious affiliation/non-affiliation reported that; 53.7% were Roman Catholics ($n = 144$), 8.6% were Protestants ($n = 23$), 6.3% were 'other Christian' ($n = 17$), 10.4% were 'believer but not religious' ($n = 28$), 5.6% were atheists ($n = 15$) and 4.9% did not provide information ($n = 13$). In all, 53.4% ($n = 143$) rated themselves as spiritual, 9.3% ($n = 25$) as non-spiritual, 31.3% ($n = 84$) as 'neither', and 6% ($n = 16$) did not provide information.

Postmodern model of spirituality measures

The postmodern model of spirituality (PMS) contains three main factors of Transcendence, Immanence, and Purpose. Table 1 contains information on each of the main factors, their respective subscales with related items.

Insert Table 1 somewhere here

Transcendence reflects the supernatural dimension of spiritual life. This was measured by two scales: God and Faith. God refers to the existence of a personal or philosophical absolute being within transcendent reality. Faith examined the human in relation to God which, represents divine religious or/and spiritual reality (unreachable physically). The belief in a reality that functions beyond time, matter and without proof or evidence. Reliability statistics reported favourable internal consistency (God: Cronbach's $\alpha = .76$; Faith: Cronbach's $\alpha = .89$).

Immanence represents the opposite reality to transcendence and reflects the mundane dimension of people's spiritual life and life in general. It is related to the existential meaning of people's life such as; dealing with the financial world, purposes, and responsibilities in life. It also refers to social relations with other people. Immanence was measured by two scales of Community and Material Values. The Community subscale reflects the interactions

between people, who share the same environment and contained three items (see Table 1). Material Values reflects material things that exist in the world and are used by people in everyday life. Reliability statistics for Material Values (Cronbach's $\alpha = .71$) and for Community (Cronbach's $\alpha = .46$).

Purpose refers to the aims of spiritual life which reflect the reality or condition in which individuals behold a purpose behind their spiritual struggle. Purpose corresponds to a quality of life that aims to be reached by personal development such as the ability to undertake actions, learning more about the reality of life, reaching happiness, acceptance of problematic aspects of life, or formation of virtues. The Purpose was measured by Deed, Ultimate Truth, Happiness, Existence, Sacrifice, and Formation. Deed corresponds to the participant's ability to undertake constructive actions or an activity stimulated by spiritual motives. Ultimate Truth measures participant's belief in the presence of one truth that is opposite to all the relativistic and unidentified worldviews and philosophies of life. Happiness measured participant's beliefs that happiness, contentment or pleasures are the ultimate purposes of human life. Existence measures participant's acceptance of tragic aspects of human life, such as surviving, death and suffering. Sacrifice examines participant's understanding and the ability of sacrifice, the evaluation that one's own life is valuable, a desired quality of life, and the ability to dedicate one's life for others. Lastly, Formation measured participant's level of conviction that spirituality should be used for human formation in the development of human character, thus gaining personal improvement. Overall, internal consistency was reported to be favourable for Deed (Cronbach's $\alpha = .73$), Ultimate Truth (Cronbach's $\alpha = .85$), Sacrifice (Cronbach's $\alpha = .82$) and Formation (Cronbach's $\alpha = .79$); however, Happiness (Cronbach's $\alpha = .42$) and Existence (Cronbach's $\alpha = .35$) reported less than favourable internal consistency.

Three core outcome variables of PMS (Transcendence, Immanence, Purpose) are predicted by latent variables Community of Faith (CF), DS, Prayer, and Self-Esteem.

The CF scale measured participant's relationship with religious institutions by three items (The Church is an institution I trust; I attend to the Church regularly; I am provided with a spiritual counselling by a priest). Reliability statistics indicated a good internal consistency (Cronbach's $\alpha = .84$):

The DS scale was a four-item scale which measured participants attitudes toward self-reflection and dialogue with one's own self, as an important part of spiritual development. Items included in the scale: Being yourself is more valuable than being rich; Spiritual life cannot exist without honest dialogue with one's own self; Dialogue with one's own self is an important aspect of spiritual life; Without inner DS it is difficult to evaluate one's own life. Good internal consistency was reported (Cronbach's $\alpha = .70$).

Prayer scale was measured by two items (A prayer is a part of my everyday practice; Prayer helps me to deal with my personal problems). Internal consistency was reported to be strong (Cronbach's $\alpha = .91$).

The Self-Esteem (SE) scale (Rosenberg 1989) comprises of 10 items that measure self-evaluation of the person. However, recent findings have suggested a two-factor solution (Boduszek et al. 2012, 2013). Namely Positive Self-Esteem (PS-E: 5-items) and Negative Self-Esteem (NS-E: 5-items). One example item of PS-E is, 'I am able to do things as well as most other people'; while one example of NS-E is, 'At times, I feel I am not good at all'.

Reliability statistics indicated an adequate to good internal consistency (PS-E: Cronbach's $\alpha = .66$; NS-E: Cronbach's $\alpha = .79$).

The core outcome variables of PMS were also predicted by four observed variables Non-Violence Attitude (NV). NV was measured by; violence is in conflict to spirituality on 4-item Likert scale. The cultural attachment was measured by the variables Music, Cinema, and TV. Music was measured by; I like to listen to current music. Cinema was measured by a question: how often you go to a cinema with possible answers: (1) almost never; (2) few times/year; (3) once/month; or (4) once/week or more. The TV was measured by the question: how much time a day do you spend watching TV, and the possible answers were: (1) 0–1h; (2) 1–3h; (3) 3–5h; or (4) more than 5h.

Demographic variables

These included single observed item measures of Age, Gender, Education, and Family. Age as a continuous variable was measured by the question: your age. Gender was measured by the question: your gender, with two possible answers: male and female. Education was measured by the question: what is your level of education, with four possible answers: (1) primary school; (2) secondary school; (3) unfinished College/University; and (4) College/University. The Family was measured by the question: you grew up in the in the family with: (1) both parents; (2) one parent; or (3) no parents.

Analysis

Preliminary analysis was conducted using SPSS 20 and descriptive statistics and Pearson's correlation coefficient were calculated. Further analysis used SEM with maximum likelihood estimation (ML) using AMOS v20. SEM employs both a structural and a measurement level. At a structural level, the conceptual model of the PMS (Figure 1) was specified and estimated. SEM employs two data analytic methods: path analysis (PA) and confirmatory factor analysis (FA). Thus, within an SEM, the structural and measurement elements of analysis are estimated simultaneously (MacCallum and Austin 2000).

For the measurement level, eight latent variables were specified and estimated (the Transcendent and Immanent dimensions of spirituality, Purpose of spirituality, Positive Self-Esteem [PS-E], Negative Self-Esteem [NS-E], participation in CF, DS and Prayer) using confirmatory factor analysis (CFA) in order to determine the factor structure and factor loadings of measured variables. This was also used to assess the fit between the data and the pre-established PMS structural model. A covariance matrix was computed, and the parameters were estimated using ML estimator. Goodness-of-fit indices were used to assess the fit of the model: chi-square (χ^2), Root-Mean-Square Error of Approximation (RMSEA; Steiger 1990) with 90% confidence interval (90% CI), Comparative Fit Index (CFI; Bentler 1990), and Incremental Fit Index (IFI; Bollen 1989). A non-significant chi-square (Kline, 2005) and values above .95 for the CFI and IFI are considered to reflect a good model fit (Hu and Bentler 1999; Vandenberg and Lance 2000). However, for CFI and IFI, values above .90 indicate adequate fit (Bentler 1990; Hu and Bentler 1999). RMSEA (estimates lack of fit compared to the saturated model) values less than .05 suggest good fit and values up to .08 indicate reasonable errors of approximation in the population (Browne and Cudeck 1993).

Results

Zero-order correlations were conducted between selected variables in order to test for their inclusion within the one structural model. Results indicated overall, variables were sufficiently correlated (see Table 2). Additionally, means and SDs are presented for all variables.

Insert Table 2 somewhere here

Model testing using SEM

The fit of the proposed PMS model was satisfactory ($\chi^2 = 922.96$, $df = 520$, $p < .05$; RMSEA = .05; CFI = .90; IFI = .90), explaining 90% of the variance in the purpose of spiritual life, 72% of the variance in the immanent dimension of spirituality, and 94% of variance in transcendent dimension of spirituality. The standardised and unstandardised path regression weights for the PMS model are presented in Table 3. The immanent dimension of spirituality was significantly predicted by PS-E ($\beta = .66$, $p < .001$), NS-E ($\beta = -.29$, $p < .01$), DS ($\beta = .25$, $p < .05$); and by the demographic factors of family structure ($\beta = .19$, $p < .01$), participation in cultural-life ($\beta = .16$, $p < .05$), and non-violent attitudes ($\beta = .19$, $p < .05$). In relation to the transcendent dimension of spirituality, this was significantly predicted by DS ($\beta = .18$, $p < .01$), prayer ($\beta = .89$, $p < .001$) and participants level of education ($\beta = .10$, $p < .01$). Finally, the purpose of spirituality dimension was significantly predicted by NS-E ($\beta = -.20$, $p < .01$), participation in life of CF ($\beta = -.15$, $p < .05$), DS ($\beta = .61$, $p < .001$), prayer ($\beta = .36$, $p < .001$) and non-violent attitudes ($\beta = .16$, $p < .001$). Interestingly; age, gender, music and TV were reported not to have any significant influence on either immanent, transcendent and purpose dimensions (see Figure 1).

Insert Table 3 somewhere here

Insert Figure 1 somewhere here

Furthermore, standardised and un-standardised factor loadings with associated standard error values for each observed variable on their respective latent variable are also presented (see Table 4). As can be observed, all factor loadings were significant and mostly sufficient in terms of the strength. However, in regard to happiness (HAPP), this loaded quite weakly on its respective factor of Purpose.

Insert Table 4 somewhere here

Discussion

The main objective of this study was to validate the proposed PMS model in a large sample using SEM technique. Based on statistics provided in the previous section (CFI, IFI and RMSEA) the model has demonstrated good construct validity and all latent constructs show good internal reliability. Put alternatively, a good-fitting PMS model is reasonably consistent with the data and so does not require re-specification. The core of the PMS consists of three dependent variables: Transcendence, Immanence, and Purpose, which represent the central structure of the evaluated concept of spirituality. These variables are constructed of

predicting independent variables. Accordingly, Transcendence is represented by God and Faith, Immanence by Community and Material Values and Purpose by Deed, Ultimate Truth, Happiness, Existence, Sacrifice, and Formation. The core variables are predicted by another five dependent variables PS-E, NS-E, CF, DS and Prayer which in turn are represented by questions. The core variables are also predicted by a group of independent variables represented by one question and therefore put as squares. These predictors are on the left side of the model as follows: Age, Gender, Education, Family, Non-Violence, Music, Cinema, and TV.

Interpretation of PMS

The transcendent dimension of spirituality was significantly predicted by the level of education, engagement in DS and time spent on private prayer. In regard to educational status, more educated people tended to be more associated with the transcendent domain of spirituality, suggesting that transcendence requires certain development of abstract thinking which expands along with educational engagement. Similarly, dialogue with one's own self sensitises to a reality which is not palpable through material means. The inner dialogue reflects the ability to transcend an individual's perspective on their own life. However, prayer was found to have the strongest prediction of the transcendent sphere. Prayer creates a significant relationship between the human being and God in divine reality. The essence of prayer is to establish and nurture dialogue, thus increasing a sense of moral awareness. Surprisingly though, a CF (e.g. Congregation of Church) did not have any significant impact; indicating to the individual rather than communal character of human relation to the transcendent reality of spirituality (c.p. Hyman and Handal 2006). This is not the only indicator of the individual character of current spirituality. Again, the findings of the study suggest that the association with a CF can discouragingly influence purposefulness of spiritual life. Each of the predictors significantly influencing the purpose of spirituality such as NV attitudes, NS-E or DS and prayer, refer to individual and personal qualities, while a CF refers to the communal and external frame, which is determined by relations within society or culture (Music, Cinema and TV). These cultural predictors, however, did not have any influence on the purpose of spirituality. The present findings revealed that the immanent sphere of spiritual life was significantly predicted by the character of the family, NV behaviour, PS-E, DS and association with culture. This would suggest that those who grew up in a complete family (with both parents) are more successful in developing the immanent dimension of their spirituality compared to those who come from incomplete families or were brought up without parents. Simplifying, people from incomplete families may find it more difficult to perceive the reality of spiritual life and engage in it from the immanent angle. Looking at the structural components of the immanent reality (Community, Material Values), there is an indication that these individuals struggle in dealing with other people and in managing material issues of life. Thus, these findings are supported by previous findings of Rovers and Kocum (2010), which also refer to the significance of family and community in the development of the immanent dimension of spirituality. Regarding the significance of culture and non-violence in the spiritual domain, the current findings are also supported by prior research. Culture (Beaudoin, 1998; Flanagan 1999; Lynch 2002; Finnegan 2008; Porter 2009; Perrin 2010) and non-violence (Weiss et al. 2003) were previously theoretically linked with shaping current spiritual phenomena. Those with non-violent attitudes are likely to have more success in dealing with others, and interestingly, in

managing material possessions. Furthermore, these findings identify the importance of self-esteem in the quality of spiritual life (cp. Johnson, Sandler, and Griffin-Shelley 1988; Bradshaw 1988; Lindgren and Coursey 1995; Crocker and Wolfe 2001; Crocker and Park 2004; Hawke, Hennen, and Gallione 2005). The negative perception of one's own self has a negative influence on immanence and purpose of spiritual life; PS-E, on the other hand, encourages only the immanent dimension. Lastly, the findings indicated that individuals, who pay attention to their inner DS, potentially have a more highly developed immanent quality of their spirituality. Interestingly, those individuals who evaluate themselves more negatively in terms of SE face more problems in the practical application of their spiritual life. In sum, NS-E may prevent the ability to develop life purposes. Unexpectedly, a high level of PS-E does not change an ability to apply spirituality for practical purposes. Similarly, Galek et al. (2005) indicated that self-realisation and happiness, which are concepts associated with self-esteem, have an influence on spirituality. Other variables which significantly influence the purpose of spiritual life refer to the engagement in DS and private prayer. The findings emphasise the importance of these two areas, especially inner dialogue, for shaping the purposefulness of spirituality. Engagement in development of self-awareness, reflecting on one's own being and/or prayer enables people's ability for turning intentions into practice and transition of internal spiritual experience into the external world of practice. The finding that DS and prayer are important aspects in the development of purpose as a spiritual domain is also in line with research of McCarroll-Butler (2005). However, interestingly, prayer does not influence the mundane spiritual domain as DS does. Thus, the study distinguishes DS from prayer and clarifies that these predictors represent different domains and are not the same as they could be perceived. The development of the practical purpose of spirituality or the meaningfulness of life was significantly influenced by NV attitudes, evaluation of self (NS-E), a CF, DS and prayer.

Overall the PMS model was found to adequately fit the data, with some of the predictors proving to be very influential in explaining the current phenomenon of spirituality. More specifically, DS-predicted all three dimensions of the spiritual model, suggesting that inner reflection is a very meaningful aspect of spiritual life within today's society. Another important factor in the development of spiritual life is prayer. Secularisation of Western societies does not destroy principles of spiritual life, especially around an individual's own prayer life. The importance of a non-violent attitude has been confirmed by the current findings as well as self-esteem that also has an important role. The development of spiritual life, however, is not dependent on age or gender. Finally, cultural factors, such as music and television, neither encourage nor distract from spiritual progress.

Justifications, limitations, and further directions

The terminology used to name the scale (PMS) employs the term 'Postmodern'. This may raise the question as to why this term was chosen as opposed to the term 'Modern', which would also have been justified (Smart 1997; Gallagher 2003). In spite of this, there is a valid account that the current epoch differentiates from Modernism begun in the fifteenth century and that the Postmodernism has its own philosophy and time frame, separate from Modernism (Lyotard 1979; Habermas & Ben-Habib 1981; Rorty 1983; Lyotard 1993; Thompson 1993; Adams 1997/1998; Holtzhausen 2000; Kielkiewicz 2013; Lakeland 2010).

Another argument supporting this decision is the fact that spirituality, as separate from the religion domain and as a new academic discipline, has appeared along with the arrival of Postmodernity. Its appearance was stimulated by the postmodern dynamic and its characteristics are allied with this epoch (De Certeau and Mayol 1998 ; Sheldrake 2005; Bottum 2010; Lakeland 2010).

Some limitations could be laid at the feet of this study, such as the number of participants (268) and the fact that they were drawn from the same country. Another possible limitation is the fact that the population of the Republic of Ireland is weakly diversified in terms of religion, as approximately 80% of the population is identified as Catholics (CSO 2016). The demographic data of this study reports that about half of the participants (53.7%) were Roman Catholics (n = 144), and 41.4% represented other religions or no religion (n = 111). In spite of much lower than the total percentage of the entire population of the country, there was still a majority of Catholic participants than representatives of other denominations, and this could have an impact on the findings of the study. It could be argued that this fact alone could shape the results in terms of association of religious predictors (i.e. Prayer) versus non-religious ones (i.e. DS).

Conclusion

Since the beginning of Postmodernity, the split of religion and spirituality has brought a need for a modern conceptualisation of spirituality. This study addressed the majority of the main theoretical concepts appearing for the last 40 years within different academic domains, including; religious, psychological, and social. A theoretical concept (PMS) was developed and tested among 268 participants of a non-purposive sample of the European population.

Implications

The findings of the study, disclosing the identity of current spirituality, reveal vital dynamics between explored variables and opens the way to an understanding of the domain in the current context. This study is a response to the dilemma of its identity, in which postmodern spirituality has found itself after separation from religion. The domain is still rooted in its Christian origins of faith, prayer and non-violent stands. It still embraces holistically human existence with a broad spectrum of its components, including transcendent (T), immanent (I) and direction with purposefulness of human life (P). It also remains steady regarding respect to the traditional model of family, at least within the immanent dimension of it. However, it would be false to declare that the domain does not evolve. The results indicate to a number of transitions which are observable within the domain of current spirituality from its Christian origins. The first of them is the significant correlation between education and culture. These two variables could appear as 'out of the box' for the original perception of the spiritual domain and indicate the alliance of this domain within these dimensions. However, the more crucial is a stronger association of self-reflection (DS) over prayer in relation to all three core dependent variables (T, I, P) and regard to the psychological qualities for the entire perception of the domain (PS-E, NS-E). These aspects do not reflect purely the identity of spirituality but indicate to the significant transition of the language within the spiritual domain. Original communal and theological core of spirituality is becoming replaced with the

individual language of psychology. The decrease in the importance of a CF represented by churches and religious congregations (CF: $-.15^*$) clearly indicates this tendency, observable anyway in decreasing number of people attending church services.

The conclusion can be made that the study reveals an important tendency in the manner of practice of current spirituality. After taking to consideration above arguments, a new method of practicing spirituality becomes visible. If the traditional language of spirituality (biblical, theological, philosophical) changes to the psychological and educational one, it is a strong indicator to movement of the spiritual phenomenon to the centres that speak this language. Consequently, these centres present already higher potential in the application of the method for spirituality. The domain as a scholarly discipline and practical domain is keen on finding its home in education and academic environments. Psychology seems to respond very accurately to the need of new home for spirituality and counselling and psychotherapy, which use academic psychological language and base their practice on an academic approach to human being seems to have an already wide spectrum of practical tools to offer. Theological and religious language still appears to be valid however, the findings show that the psychological understanding is more prominent. This research reveals also another practical implication for those who develop their spiritual life. The significant predictors of dependent variables Transcendence, Immanence and Purpose indicate what stimulates the progress of spiritual growth. Education stimulates the development of the transcendent sphere of life, NV attitude and SE immanent and purposefulness. Prayer is crucial for Transcendence and Purpose and DS creates growth of all three components of spiritual life. This knowledge may be utilised within formational and mental health environments to facilitate peoples' well-being, personal development or social inclusion.

Recommendations

This study has proven that this subject is of interest and popular concern. For this reason, consideration should be given to conducting similar research within populations of different religious denominations and various cultural traditions. As the Irish population is strongly embedded in Catholicism, it is recommended to validate the findings among the population of different religions, diversified culturally or culturally dissimilar. The limitation of the number of participants could be also addressed and the study could be conducted among a larger number of participants.

The findings of the study indicate which predictors stimulate the development of dependent spiritual dimensions. It would be vital to examine, practically, the accuracy of the findings within some formational fields such as psychotherapy or education. For instance, an emphasis placed on the development of self-esteem, DS, non-violent attitudes and family life, factually stimulates the growth of the immanent dimension of life as the study informs. The growth of purpose and transcendent dimension in human life could be tested through the development of appropriate aspects of life. Undertaking such studies would provide an applied knowledge and open a path towards practical application of the findings within above and related fields.

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Tables & Figures

Table 1 Spirituality factors with associated alpha coefficients

Spirituality Factors	<i>Alpha</i>
<i>Transcendence</i>	
<i>God</i>	.76
God is someone who loves me the most	
God is an idea which does not exist in reality	
It is possible to live according to God's will	
<i>Faith</i>	.89
Faith is important in my life	
Most of the time, the faith helps me to cope with my everyday problems	
Faith helps me to evaluate my life	
<i>Immanence</i>	
<i>Community</i>	.46
Life is most worthwhile when is lived in service to other people	
We need each other to stay psychically healthy	
Community is an important part of every person's normal life	
<i>Material Values</i>	.71
Money is very important to me	
Money is something I cannot imagine my life without	
<i>Purpose</i>	
<i>Deed</i>	.73
An authentic spiritual life can be verified only by good deed	
An immoral life disproves an authentic spiritual life	
An authentic spiritual life always results in moral success	
<i>Ultimate Truth</i>	.85
Finding of the meaning and purpose of life is one of the most important goals in our life	
Life is only worthwhile when is a search for the sense of life	
Life without a search for the meaning and purpose is not much worth	
<i>Happiness</i>	.42
I believe that finding happiness in life is more important than finding the sense of life	
Do you agree that heading towards happiness is the most important in life?	
Everyone just wants to be happy, even if others need to suffer because of it a little	
<i>Existence</i>	.35
Pain and suffering often are reason for reorientation and re-examination of life	
Going through tragic things happening in life makes me depressed	
I need to suffer sometimes, as everyone	
<i>Sacrifice</i>	.82
Authentically spiritual person does a lot for others	
Spirituality helps to distance of own selfishness and egocentrism to be more helpful for others	
Spiritual people can do more for others than non-spiritual persons	
<i>Formation</i>	.79
Spiritual life should head towards practical personal improvement	
Spiritual life should develop personality	
Spirituality is also about formation of human's character	

Table 2 Correlations between PMS variables

Variables	M	SD	G	F	COM	MV	UT	HAP	EX	SAC	FOR	D	SEP	SEN	CF	DS
G	8.27	2.44	---													
F	8.24	2.70	.80**	---												
COM	9.38	1.61	.37**	.40**	---											
MV	8.71	1.52	.08	.15*	.41**	---										
UT	7.76	2.33	.49**	.54**	.38**	.12	---									
HAP	8.37	1.64	-.03	.10	.14*	.26**	.14*	---								
EX	7.77	1.75	.31**	.34**	.33**	.07	.32**	.12	---							
SAC	7.45	2.23	.61**	.61**	.41**	.07	.70**	.09	.38**	---						
FOR	8.12	2.06	.53**	.57**	.42**	.12	.64**	.13	.39**	.71**	---					
D	7.49	2.08	.60**	.67**	.39**	.18**	.64**	.10	.41**	.70**	.71**	---				
PS-E	16.24	1.95	.18**	.16*	.32**	.24**	.12	.22**	.07	.12	.18**	.07	---			
NS-E	14.28	3.20	-.24**	-.28**	-.13	-.12	-.42**	-.27**	-.24**	-.36**	-.33**	-.45**	.26**	---		
CF	8.30	3.14	.64**	.63**	.31**	.11	.39**	-.06	.23**	.45**	.43**	.57**	-.05	-.35**	---	
DS	11.86	2.18	.49**	.50**	.36**	.04	.55**	.15*	.44**	.60**	.65**	.57**	.19**	-.31**	.36**	---
Prayer	5.09	2.06	.78**	.83**	.34**	.06	.50**	.05	.29**	.58**	.57**	.61**	.09	-.38**	.69**	.46**

Note. Statistical significance: * $p < .05$; ** $p < .01$.

Table 3 Prediction of transcendence, immanence and purpose

Latent Variables		Predictor Variables	B	S.E.	β
Transcendence	<---	SEP	-.12	.37	-.02
Immanence	<---	SEP	1.72	.35	.66***
Purpose	<---	SEP	.35	.29	.06
Transcendence	<---	SEN	.32	.22	.08
Immanence	<---	SEN	-.38	.15	-.29**
Purpose	<---	SEN	-.58	.18	-.20**
Transcendence	<---	CHU	-.05	.16	-.02
Immanence	<---	CHU	.15	.09	.18
Purpose	<---	CHU	-.26	.12	-.15*
Transcendence	<---	DIA	1.21	.39	.18**
Immanence	<---	DIA	.53	.24	.25*
Purpose	<---	DIA	2.75	.44	.61***
Purpose	<---	PRA	.65	.14	.36***
Immanence	<---	PRA	-.05	.11	-.06
Transcendence	<---	PRA	2.28	.21	.89***
Transcendence	<---	Age	.01	.00	.03
Immanence	<---	Age	-.01	.00	-.04
Purpose	<---	Age	-.01	.00	-.02
Purpose	<---	Gender	.21	.14	.06
Immanence	<---	Gender	.03	.11	.02
Transcendence	<---	Gender	.02	.17	.01
Purpose	<---	Education	.05	.08	.02
Immanence	<---	Education	-.04	.06	-.04
Transcendence	<---	Education	.31	.11	.10**
Transcendence	<---	Family	-.25	.26	-.03
Immanence	<---	Family	-.46	.17	.19**
Purpose	<---	Family	-.23	.20	-.04
Transcendence	<---	Music	.01	.13	.01
Immanence	<---	Cinema	.16	.07	.16*
Purpose	<---	Television	.01	.08	.01
Immanence	<---	Music	-.02	.08	-.02
Purpose	<---	Music	-.04	.10	-.01
Transcendence	<---	Cinema	.06	.11	.02
Purpose	<---	Cinema	-.03	.09	-.02
Immanence	<---	Television	.10	.06	.10
Transcendence	<---	Television	-.01	.11	-.01
Purpose	<---	Violence	.30	.08	.16***
Immanence	<---	Violence	.16	.06	.19*
Transcendence	<---	Violence	.16	.10	.06

Note. Statistical significance: * $p < .05$; ** $p < .01$; *** $p < .001$

Table 4 Factor loadings of PMS latent variables

Indicator s	Latent Variable	B	S.E.	β
F	<--- Transcendence	1.00	---	.91***
G	<--- Transcendence	.87	.04	.87***
MV	<--- Immanence	1.00	---	.53***
COM	<--- Immanence	1.53	.22	.77***
FOR	<--- Purpose	1.00	---	.84***
SAC	<--- Purpose	1.08	.07	.84***
EX	<--- Purpose	.49	.06	.48***
HAPP	<--- Purpose	.17	.06	.18**
UT	<--- Purpose	1.05	.08	.78***
D	<--- Purpose	.97	.07	.82***
SE1	<--- PS-E	1.00	---	.54***
SE2	<--- PS-E	.85	.13	.50***
SE3	<--- PS-E	1.57	.19	.79***
SE4	<--- PS-E	1.40	.18	.72***
SE10	<--- PS-E	.75	.17	.33***
SE6	<--- NS-E	1.00	---	.68***
SE7	<--- NS-E	.87	.09	.68***
SE8	<--- NS-E	1.05	.11	.68***
SE9	<--- NS-E	.98	.11	.68***
SE5	<--- NS-E	.87	.10	.60***
CF1	<--- CF	1.00	---	.95***
CF2	<--- CF	.84	.04	.83***
CF3	<--- CF	.65	.05	.66***
Pray2	<--- Prayer	1.00	---	.90***
Pray1	<--- Prayer	1.06	.04	.92***
DS4	<--- DS	1.00	---	.50***
DS3	<--- DS	1.58	.21	.75***
DS2	<--- DS	1.76	.22	.82***
DS 1	<--- DS	.57	.12	.33***

Note. Statistical significance: * $p < .05$; ** $p < .01$; *** $p < .001$

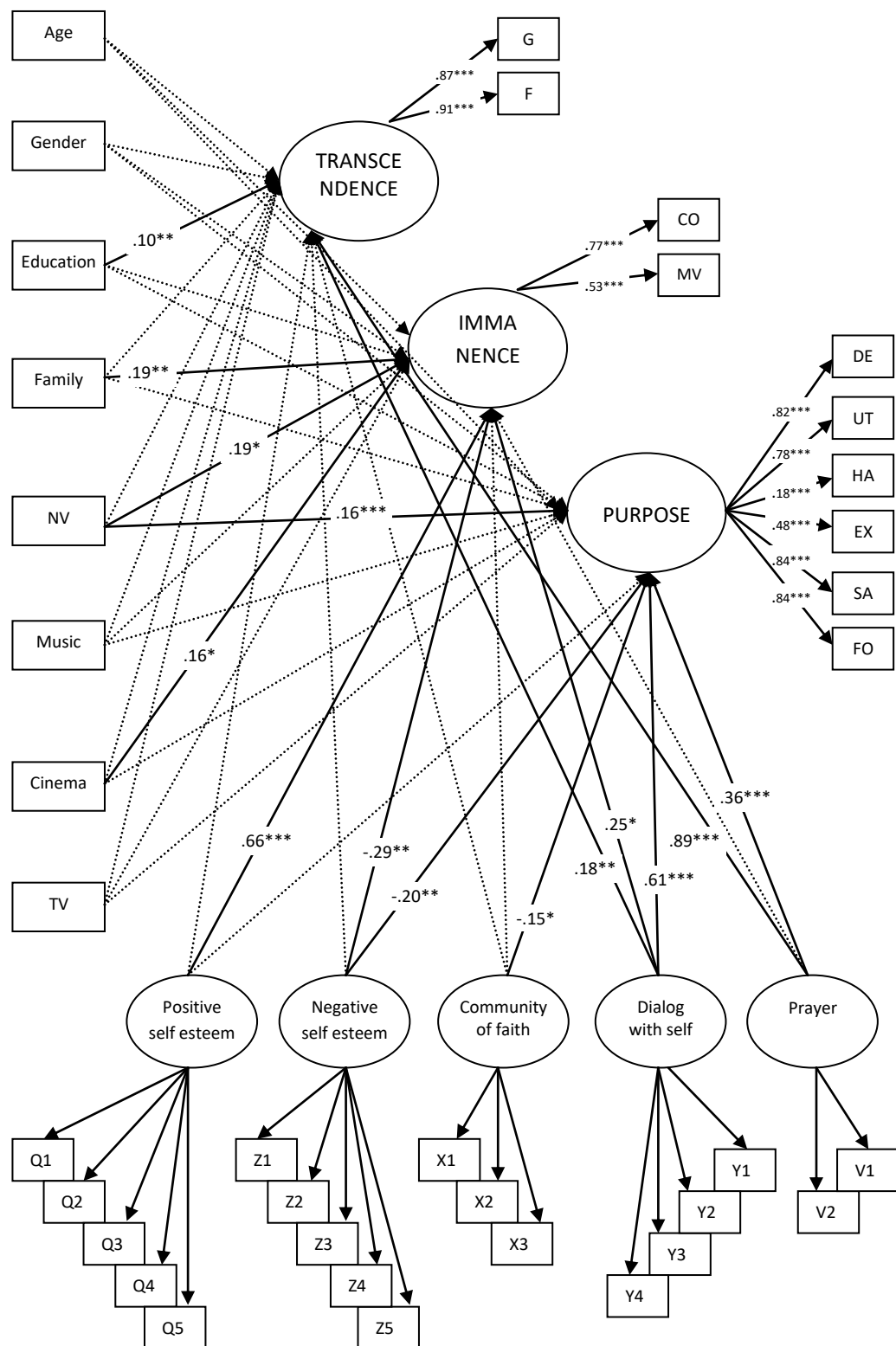


Figure 1 Model of the Postmodern Concept of Spirituality

Note: NV = Non-Violence Attitudes, TV = Television, G = God, F = Faith, CO = Community, MV = Material Values, DE = Deed, UT = Ultimate Truth, HA = Happiness, EX = Existence, SA = Sacrifice, FO = Formation, Q, Z, X, Y, V = Question,

→ significant relation,→ non-significant relation